

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR."

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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CHAPTER XXIX. SUNDAY MUSIC.

IF Sidney Jones had taken kindly to his books since his mentor had helped him on, he had not taken a strong liking for church-going. Yet every Sunday morning, without, however, asking Sidney to accompany him, Austin Gordon trudged off, that is, if there was a place to trudge to in these odd Continental places. The Professor never went to any place of worship, and treated church-going as a mild madness; he believed in nothing but that which he indicated when he tapped his forehead, and he could worship that quite as well at home. The Professorin went sometimes to a Lutheran church; but it was only when she had nothing better to do and wanted to see her neighbours en masse.

The next Sunday Austin wandered off early and strolled round the town before the time-honoured hour of eleven, when most good English people went to church. Unterberg was indeed a very picturesque place, especially on Sundays, when the native taste burst forth into large white sleeves, velvet bodices, and curious head-dresses. The Roman Catholic cathedral was crowded, and when Austin peeped in he heard the nasal tones of a German preacher going on. Then he went out and turned his steps to a big square room, which was the meeting-place of the English Protestants. It was not particularly cheerful after the cathedral, but it was his ser-

vice. The dull gentleman who officiated could not alter the familiar words which recalled England so much to him. But coming out, he was aware all at once that Miss Evans was before him; she and her sister were walking rather quickly towards Marienstrasse. He could not see more than an occasional glimpse of her profile; but he found himself wondering what could have made those two settle here so young, yet seemingly alone. Instead of turning into their own street, the two girls went on and walked towards some public gardens, and, strange to say, Austin settled that he, too, wished to walk there. It was a nice lounge before the midday meal; there could be no harm in it, for Sidney was most likely wandering far away out in the country. So he entered the Square and paced leisurely round it. At first he fancied he was misled, and that the sisters had passed out of the opposite gate; but presently he spied them out, sitting alone in a retired corner. Just as he came round a corner, Grace, who was facing him, lifted her head and looked straight towards him, then lowered her eyes without recognition. What a sad, gentle expression! The other sister might be more beautiful, but that look, that special beauty of expression was not imprinted on her face. Austin walked on slowly past them, as if sauntering for pleasure, and when he reached them, the younger one turned her head and looked up at him; he even heard her say, when she thought he was out of hearing:

"Grace, that is one of those Englishmen we met the other day. Do you remember him?"

Austin fancied he heard her say "No," but he was not sure; anyhow, they had not found out that the Englishmen lived

just above them. They had not taken so much interest in him as he had in them; why should they? Austin had never thought about love; though he had, like most youths, admired many girls he had met. Now and then he had said that he should like to marry some one just like so-and-so; but then he had made this remark about several young ladies. Latterly, however, even these ideas had faded from his mind. One cannot marry on nothing, and when one's relations require all the help one can give them, one need not think of a wife for many years. But for the last six months Austin had been relieved from this burden of having to think for others. His mother and sisters would now have plenty of money for themselves, and his mother had even written to say she was willing to make him a good allowance when the affairs about the property were settled. The bare knowledge of this made him think more about the future and the possible "Mrs. Austin Gordon," for, as he slowly paced the garden, Austin said to himself:

"I have never seen a face like that before. I wonder if she is like her face or whether it is simply the work of nature?"

Then he again speculated about the circumstances which had brought these sisters in this out-of-the-way place. These speculations brought him home.

He found Sidney with a cigar and a novel, looking the picture of contentment; but this was harmless occupation compared to past amusements.

"My dear and virtuous Gordon, have you been rewarded for your pains? Did you sleep through the sermon or lose yourself in pleasant recollections of this new property? By the way, I have been considering since your absence that by nature you are very close and secretive."

"I think it more probable that you have been thinking of nothing but your novel and the accompanying cigar," said Austin, smiling; "the sermon was a very well worked out piece of reasoning on the dangers of idleness."

"It fits in too well with the mentor's present thoughts for me to believe that," said Sidney, rising, throwing away his cigar, and stretching himself. "However, I have seen a rival in the opposite house. The Professorin says that some great man lives there, a young Count von Something, and that he is a very good-for-nothing fellow. I believe he only rose from his

couch at eleven o'clock. You must agree, mentor, that by comparison, I am very——"

"Hungry, if you share my feelings at all."

"Oh, the Professorin and her maiden have been deep in the saucepans this morning. I expect a meal of the gods after their labours. I declare I have told you all the news, and you have told me nothing but the contents of a sermon. Did you see any one at church that was interesting?"

"It was full, and rather hot."

"But any one especially? My golden ideal, for instance?"

"I believe the Misses Evans were there; but they sat behind me, so I cannot tell you if the golden hair was natural or dyed."

"Dyed! for shame to suspect such an innocent and youthful beauty. Gretchen was not to be found this morning, so I had no one to play with, and felt like the idle boy of the fable till I picked up this novel."

"Unwholesome trash," remarked Austin, glancing at the title. "The Professor would say it was written by a woman."

"There is a man's name on the title page; so most likely it was. By the way, why have not some of us taken to writing under female names? I declare it quite inspires me to write. What name should I take? 'Carry Carew'? That is a good aliteration."

The summons to dinner ended this conversation, for then came the Professor's turn to hold forth. There was no resisting German eloquence; it made even Sidney subside into silence. It was not till the afternoon that the friends sauntered out again to some gardens, further off, where the band played some heavenly music. All Unterberg came to this cheerful meeting. There was much talking and introduction of friends, and even the Professor and his wife deigned to join the crowd. At last the party found a bench just being vacated by some nursemaids, and sat down, the better to enjoy the music. The Professorin had a great deal to say to many acquaintances; but the Professor only nodded a little condescendingly to their "friends," and his face wore a quiet smile of scorn; and presently embarked in a long comparison of Gessner and Voss, to which Austin alone listened.

"Come, then, Ludwig, and give me thy arm to walk through the gardens," said his wife at last, thinking that Voss idylls mattered very little in comparison to a walk among her acquaintances; but Ludwig was unwilling to move; and Sidney, with

courtesy, begged in polite German the honour of giving the Professorin an arm. As she was tall and stout, the couple looked a little queer; but Sidney was not the least abashed, and proudly escorted the lady.

Austin was a good listener, and put in the right number of answers. Presently he became aware that the crowd had thinned around them, and then two ladies approached. Austin looked up quickly. Was it fatality? For surely here was Miss Evans. There she stood, not noticing him, and by her was the beautiful sister. He could distinctly hear their conversation, so close were they to him. Grace had put on a large shady hat—which was quite in fashion at Unterberg—under which her quiet, sad, good face looked out into the happy crowd as if she were not one of them, but simply an indifferent looker-on. Sibyl was different: her eyes brightened at the sound of the music, for the whole scene, so new to her, made her dream of pleasure.

"Oh, Gracie, I wish we knew more people here. It is so dull only just knowing two or three, isn't it? When one sees everybody chatting together, it makes one feel so——"

"So thankful that we have each other," said Grace, smiling; "that's what you mean, Sibyl, isn't it?"

"Well, of course that; but if it hadn't been for——"

"Hush," said Grace, lowering her voice; "so many people understand English."

"You are always so cautious; but Grace, I do wish we could find a bench. I am tired of standing, and the music is so pretty."

Austin's impulse was at once to get up; but as the speakers did not see him he was forced to address them.

"I beg your pardon——"

Grace turned round with a start, at hearing English, perhaps, and this time she recognised him, and the colour flushed her cheeks from shyness.

"I beg your pardon, but here is a seat close at hand."

"Thank you. Sit down, Sibyl, I am not tired;" and not loth, Sibyl took the place vacated by Austin.

Now it happened that the Professor was in the middle of a sentence, therefore Austin could not move away as he would otherwise have done, so he stood by whilst the Professor, disturbed in the chain of his arguments, turned round and saw a

very pretty English golden-haired young lady instead of the Englishman. He bowed politely but felt aggrieved.

"You were saying——" said Austin.

But the Professor only answered:

"We will continue the discussion to-night."

Sibyl looked at Austin and smiled, why she knew not, except at the Professor's evident annoyance; and Austin, nothing loth, took the smile as a permission to speak.

"Have you been long at Unterberg? I think I saw you at the English church?"

Sibyl was so glad to hear her own tongue spoken by some one else, and that some one such a perfect gentleman, that she did not stop to consider that Grace would most likely scold her afterwards for talking to a stranger.

"We have been here all the winter; it was cold and cheerless at first, but now the country looks very pretty. When we have time we mean to take some long walks. Are you going on anywhere else?"

"My friend and I are staying here some time," said Austin, looking sideways at Grace, who stood there so silent and looking almost sad. "We are learning German from sheer necessity; that really seems the only true method."

"We found it very difficult at first," said Sibyl, "but now it is easy. We can say anything we want to say; besides, people are very kind in helping strangers out of difficulties, aren't they, Grace?"

Grace, appealed to, seemed to come back to the present surroundings; the truth was, she did not wish to get into conversation with the unknown young man. What business had they to make acquaintances? But Sibyl was so anxious to find amusement; she was so much younger by nature, not years, than Grace. Youth would assert itself.

"Yes, every one is very kind; but we have very little time to see our neighbours if we knew any. We have pupils all the week."

Grace said these words distinctly, and Sibyl blushed.

"How silly of Grace to be so plain-spoken; we need not tell everybody what we do! Why cannot a stranger speak a few civil words without Grace putting on her serious face?"

Austin suddenly found out that this eldest sister was no common being. He looked at her again without appearing to do so, and traced the delicate outline which,

though in itself pretty, yet was not to be compared to the expression of the whole countenance. To him, the golden-haired sister was a picture; but Miss Evans was an ideal woman. Something, too, there was in her face that seemed familiar to him. He fancied that somewhere he must have seen her before; but he thought over all his young lady acquaintances in vain.

"I suppose you will pass the summer here?" he said, addressing Grace, feeling at the same time that he was not pleasing her by continuing the conversation; but for once Austin acted against his better feeling.

"Yes; I expect we shall always live here," she answered, quietly, "that is, if we can earn enough money to do so."

Sibyl laughed nervously. Just like Grace again, she thought.

"I should not mind living here," said Austin, feeling a fool, "that is, if one could forget one's own country."

"Yes, that is it," said Sibyl, quickly, almost angrily. "England must always be home—never mind how pretty other countries may be."

"Yes, indeed," echoed Grace, with earnestness; then she added, almost with authority: "You must be rested now, Sibyl, shall we walk on?"

Sibyl rose reluctantly, but this time she bowed pleasantly to the stranger, and Grace, slightly lifting her head, did the same. Her face seemed to say, "We couldn't help it this time, but don't speak to us again."

Austin, however, would not understand the look; he could not remember ever before having seen a face that impressed him so much. What was the history of those sisters? Why were they going always to live in this little German town?

What was the good of thinking about them, however? Only if he could be of use to them—to her—that would be something worth doing! In vain Austin tried to think of something else—to see something else. Grace—he heard her name. Grace Evans's face seemed painted on his brain and always before his eyes.

"So," said the Professor, "those are the young English ladies. I could not understand what you said to them; but they seem too pretty to be going about without a protector."

"They cannot help it if Nature has not provided one," said Austin. "I suppose they are poor governesses;" but he

could not inform the Professor that those were the two ladies who lodged with Fräulein Hanson.

Presently Sidney appeared in the distance, still with the good German Fräulein on his arm, their conversation having been all nods and exclamations.

"Hulloa, old fellow, have you discussed the whole range of German literature?"

"If you had been with us you would have seen the Misses Evans. I believe that is the correct plural."

"Indeed!" smiled Austin.

"The Professorin calls them charming."

"I bow to her taste. Come, Sidney, I have had enough of band-playing, I'm off to the woods."

"Agreed!" and off they went, promising the lady to reappear for the evening meal.

CHAPTER XXX. ANNA'S KNAPSACK.

THE household arrangements of Fräulein Hanson were very modest, and the two rooms of her lodgers were no exceptions. The two sisters had very little money, and the pupils were not numerous. What Grace could do to beautify the bare rooms she did; and very often she thanked Nan in her heart for having brought her up to be useful, and not to be afraid of hard work. There was much need for it now; and sometimes when Sibyl lay asleep on her little iron bed, Grace sat up stitching. The warmer weather had come, and they must have thinner dresses, and the old ones altered. What they earned only just kept them in food, for Grace was determined not to spend the rent-money for fear Fräulein Hanson should suffer. Sibyl hated needlework, and though she tried to do a little her help was only hindrance, for Grace usually had to unpick it again. But not one complaint or cross word passed her lips. For her Sibyl she would have done much more, if only she could make her happy. But somehow, lately, Sibyl's spirits had sunk very low; she was not as cheerful as she had been, and sometimes abused fate and everybody; sometimes, even, she was cross with Grace. Grace always found an excuse for her; but, nevertheless, she shed a few tears at night when Sibyl was fast asleep dreaming, and then, when her eyes and head ached with poring over the needlework, Grace would creep to bed, thinking of Nan and home.

In the morning there was much to be done—little household cares and the walk

to the market, whilst Sibyl received the pupils and taught them. The younger girl liked this better than going to market; besides, if she went she was sure to bring home something that was too expensive, and the accounts would be wrong for the week. Sibyl was so accustomed to Grace doing everything, that it never occurred to her how easily she gave up all the disagreeable little duties to that patient sister.

One day when the morning class had been dismissed, and Grace was preparing a very simple repast, Sibyl came and sat down by her sister, and Grace, looking at her, saw something was amiss.

"What is the matter, darling?" she asked, gently. "Are you tired?"

"Yes, I am tired of all this, Gracie. I met Fräulein Storme this morning, when I took home little Liza, and the very sight of her made me feel angry, and brought back our troubles. Why should Mrs.—"

"Don't say it again, Sibyl; it does not make matters any better. Remember that Nan is working for us; think of the future, Sibyl."

"The future! I should think very far ahead if I thought of that. No, Grace, we can only just manage to live, and how are we ever to save money so as to go back to England? It is cruel, unjust. Listen, Gracie. I had an offer this morning from Liza's mother, and I think I had better accept it. She wants me to go over there every morning and stay for dinner, and teach the two elder girls English; she will pay me well. And I really think that the few children who come here you can easily manage alone."

Grace thought at once that she must rise much earlier if she had to get all her purchases done, and to keep the two rooms tidy, and then to be ready to teach the children when they came. But Sibyl might be less dull going out every morning, and it was such a little way—only down the next street. She would get a good dinner, too, every day, and that would please her; so she answered, gently:

"Yes, dear, you would like it better I think, and I can manage the children here very well."

"I thought you would consider it a good plan, Grace, so I accepted it; I am to begin at once. I am so tired of this same view day after day and those children. Well, they mean to be good, but they are so stupid. I can't think how you can be so patient with them."

"Is this lady a nice person, Sibyl? I

shouldn't like you to have to do with any one who would not be kind."

"Oh, yes, she is charming; of good family, too! She is aunt to the Count who lives opposite. You know, Grace—the one who comes and smokes on the balcony in the evening."

No, Grace did not know. She was not accustomed to study who smoked on the opposite side of the street; but she was a little sad that Sibyl should have engaged herself without first consulting her. Yet she would not complain or say one word of reproach. It so happened that the sisters had not found out that the two gentlemen who lodged above were the two they had seen on the Sunday. They had happened to meet on the stairs, and Grace only knew vaguely that there were lodgers above. But the next day, when Sibyl hastily and happily arrayed herself in her out-of-doors things, she passed Austin on the stairs coming down from above. Sibyl bowed and smiled.

"Do you live above us?" she asked, simply.

"Yes; my friend and I are staying with the Professor. I hope you were not tired last Sunday and that your sister found a seat afterwards."

"No, we went home after that. I hope we shall go again next Sunday; but Grace does not like crowded places very much."

"Certainly there are charms in solitude; still, those military bands are worth hearing. I will try and reserve a seat for you next Sunday," added Austin, politely. He knew he could not have dared to say this to Miss Evans; but the younger and more lively girl was very easy to get on with. They had reached the front door and separated; but Sibyl went off to her work with a more cheerful smile on her face.

Left alone upstairs, Grace patiently went through her daily duties, growing every day thinner as the weeks flew by and the weather became hotter and more oppressive, her few pleasures being the Sunday walk with Sibyl or the letters from Nan. She strove hard against the feeling of loneliness—almost of despair, that was creeping over her. She filled up all her time so as to have none to waste in thoughts of self or of pleasure. There were the children, too, and she threw herself into her task. She could not help loving children; they were so innocent—so loving; to them she was "dear Fräulein," nothing more nor less. They knew nothing of her history, nothing of the shame or the pain which, in spite of

herself, was making Grace old before her time. By-and-by there came a tribe of little ones, which Grace could not refuse, for the pay, though slender, helped out the housekeeping. The mothers wanted them kept good all the morning and taught English. Grace liked these times better than the older children, who must be kept more severely.

Much to Sibyl's disappointment, Grace had refused to go any more to the band-playing; she did not like meeting those Englishmen, and she did not know they lodged above her, Sibyl never having told her.

Curiously enough, as Grace became quieter and sadder, Sibyl's spirits rose higher. Since she had been to the daily lessons she seemed happier, and declared that it was much more amusing than to sit moping at home. Her eyes became brighter and prettier, the colour came back to her cheeks, so that sometimes in fun Grace told her she was prettier than any German in Unterberg.

"Do you think so, Gracie?" Sibyl answered, quite earnestly. "Ah, if things had been different I might have married some Englishman, and——" She burst into tears, much to Grace's astonishment.

"Do you want to leave me, Sibyl?" asked Grace, tenderly stroking her hair. "We are all in all to each other, are not we? What matters anything else?"

"Of course, Gracie; I was only stupid," and she quickly dried her eyes, and prepared to start off to her morning work.

Grace pondered a little after her departure as to what could be the matter; then, putting away the thought, she thought that, of course, Sibyl must feel sad sometimes, in spite of her natural high spirits; it is only natural.

The little ones trooped in at nine o'clock; then there was no more time for meditation, but plenty to attend to.

"Where is Anna Steinwey?" she asked of the others.

"She was not ready, so we left her to come alone, it is so near," said the eldest.

Grace thought no more about the absent one and began her teaching, but the youngest of the four cried when she was asked a question; then it turned out that she had a very grievous "kopfweg."

"Poor little Minna, why didn't you say so instead of crying?" said Grace, tenderly, as she took up the tiny child on her lap and laid the fair head against

her bosom, putting her cool hand on the hot forehead. The little girl was comforted, and Grace went on with the class round her, keeping Minna on her lap. The hum of voices soothed the little one, and very soon she fell fast asleep.

"Speak softly, children," said Grace, looking down on the slumbering little one; "do not wake her, and she will soon be well."

At that moment there was a tap at the door, and Grace said, "Come in." Then there entered a gentleman, leading the missing Anna by the hand.

Grace was much astonished as she glanced quickly at the intruder and recognised the acquaintance of the garden.

Austin Gordon felt as if he were very much in the way and too tall to stand among so many tiny morsels of humanity, so he apologised humbly to Grace as she said:

"I am sorry I cannot get up to receive you, the little girl is asleep; she was not well."

"It is I who should apologise, Miss Evans," he said, humbly; "but I was at the ornamental water in the gardens near here, and I found this young lady in great despair; she had dropped her knapsack and all the precious lesson-books into the water, and they were lying right at the bottom." Anna was still sobbing quietly over this terrible misfortune.

"I only looked in one little bit to try and see the fishes," she said, "and——"

"And Miss Anna was afraid to come on to you, so there she stayed sobbing till I told her I would come back with her and beg her forgiveness. I am sure I shall not ask in vain."

Austin all this while had been looking at that picture before him, feeling that he should always love the little sinner, Anna, who had given him the opportunity of seeing Miss Evans with the child on her lap, bending her sweet face over it.

Nor had Anna been a made-up excuse; the truant had been dreadfully frightened, fearing to go home or to go to her class.

"I am afraid you were playing, Anna; but the others should have waited for her. Is there no means of fishing out the lost treasures?" asked Grace, speaking now in English, and trying to hide a smile.

"Yes," said Austin, also smiling; "I waded in for them, but I have left them to be dried by the fire of the good woman who lives below, and who has a sym-

pathy with youthful sinners. Frän Hanson told me to come and speak to you myself when she opened the door." Austin felt he had done his mission, but having—quite unbidden—taken a chair, he could not hurry away; he thought he had never seen anything more beautiful than Grace. If he had been an artist he could have desired no better model. Grace only spoke in soft tones, but to-day she was not very shy; with these children all round her she felt well protected. However, she did just wonder why the stranger sat down.

"I promise Anna shall not be too severely scolded," said Grace, again smiling; "she is a new-comer, and has not yet found out that I cannot scold very well."

"I cannot imagine you being very severe, Miss Evans. Ah, there is Gretchen. Your friend has been complaining that you are so studious, Gretchen, that we never see you."

Gretchen, though looking very demure, had been staring at the other Mr. Jones, hoping he would recognise her. Seeing Grace looked surprised, Austin explained:

"We live with the Professor, Miss Evans, so we knew Miss Gretchen before you came; but since then she can no longer be found running up and down stairs."

"You live above!" said Grace, surprised. "I did not know; but I go out so seldom; we know scarcely any one here."

"The Professor is very anxious to make your acquaintance," continued Austin. "He wishes to find out whether English ladies can use their brains; he is all thought."

"I think Frän Hanson knows the Professor a little," said Grace, as if wishing to ignore all acquaintances for herself. Then followed a pause, which said plainly:

"Are you going?" So Austin was forced to rise, apologise again for his intrusion, and then depart. He could not shake hands, and Grace still remained seated, and never offered him hers; but she bowed and smiled very sweetly, as she said:

"You were very kind to bring back Anna. Thank you very much."

Austin felt still more how very deserving of praise Anna was for letting her books fall into the pond. If only she could do so every day!

Then, as he ascended his own flight of stairs, he called himself a fool for admiring a girl he knew nothing about, who was evidently poor and proud, and did not

wish to know him, and who, moreover, would certainly not trouble her head about a strange Englishman, who might, for all she knew, be also a stray adventurer.

The next instant Austin laughed at himself. He whom Sidney regarded as the embodiment of cautious wisdom to be thus suddenly smitten with a pretty face—a face which recurred to him constantly—and moreover to believe, as he half believed now, that he had done that most unwise and unheard of thing, and fallen in love at first sight. This was indeed a downfall of his self-esteem. What would his mother say if she knew it? What would the sensible Frances or fastidious Minnie think of him?

"She may be poor or proud, or both, but she is good and beautiful," thought Austin, annoyed, in spite of himself; "the only face I have ever cared to think of twice, or to——" He stopped. How could he be so bold, so utterly reckless of consequences to himself? After all he was nothing to her; how should he be? About one thing Austin was determined—no hint of his feelings should be seen; never by look or word would he betray the secret to Sidney. Nevertheless, this did not prevent him from wishing all the more to see her again.

During the reading the mentor was somewhat distraught, and made many mistakes, so that the Professor cleared his throat and made several exclamations of surprise. "Herman and Dorothea" was almost too descriptive, and Austin was not sorry when the Professorin burst into the room.

"It is the Professor's fête day on Thursday," said the good lady, looking at her husband. "What cake wilt thou have, Ludwig, on thy natal day?"

There was such a curious incongruity between the shrivelled up, learned Professor and a birthday cake that the young men smiled.

The Professor seemed, however, to find it quite natural, and no wonder, since he had been asked the same question ever since his honeymoon days; indeed it was the only bit of external sentiment ever exchanged between the couple.

He named the favourite cake with philosophical gravity and added, "But make it sweeter than last time, Anna."

The great lady nodded her head.

"And shall you not ask your friends to keep this great event?" asked Austin.

"By the way, we might do so, Ludwig;

what say you? The young Herren would like to see good society."

"That means, Anna, the society of Unterberg; I fear that is of no great mental value. They are poor creatures, and possess few brains here—very few."

"But what about your own neighbours in the house?" suggested Austin, as calmly as usual, for lovers are deceitful.

"Our little Gretchen, with the long plait," put in Sidney. "Will you not allow, Professor, that out of the mouth of babes truth and sense comes forth? Unintentionally, of course."

"By the way, that is a good idea," said the Fräulein; "we will ask Fräulein Hanson to come and taste your cake, and to bring Gretchen. She is a good woman, and never opens her mouth."

"Which shows her sense. Yes, certainly, let us ask Fräulein Hanson, and, by the way, we must beg her to bring these English ladies—that will please our friends. They were very gracious and pretty when we saw them the other Sunday," said the Professor, smiling, looking at Austin.

Sidney was, of course, anxious to know when the mentor had seen the ladies, and said he had been very close not to have mentioned the fact before.

"You did not wait for my news," answered Austin, smiling, "but you at once told me I had missed seeing your friends, so I did not wish to dispute the honour with you."

"My dear mentor, female charms have no allurements for you. You may think yourself fortunate that I am not at this moment raving about that golden hair or writing sonnets to her eyebrows."

"I do," said Gordon. "You are bad enough in your calm moments—but in love—"

"Well, I promise to be discreet; besides, a little English governess won't be the girl fit for the position that S. J. means to occupy, so have no fears."

Though spoken in fun, the words were true enough, and Sidney had no intention of making love to a penniless girl who had not even a title to make up for poverty. As to her beauty that was undeniable, but pretty girls are not very uncommon.

Austin felt disagreeably conscious that in this case it was Sidney who was acting as mentor, and that they were reversing their functions.

Happily the Professorin was suddenly smitten with the wish to exhibit her cake to the English ladies; she was sure they

would not be able to tell her how the wonder was made, and they would be sure to ask her for the recipe, as did all her German acquaintances. Not that she ever told them all the secret; but she always left out one or more special ingredients. It would never do for Ludwig's birthday cake to become common property at Unterberg. The secret had come from the Royal kitchen, and having passed through less elevated households, had at last reached the Fräulein Professorin.

After much thought and careful preparation, the Professorin wrote the note in very scratchy writing, with as many flourishes as she could conveniently add.

Would the much-honoured Fräulein Hanson favour them with her presence in order to taste the Professor's birthday cake and delight them with her cheerful conversation? Also Gretchen was to be brought if the Fräulein Hanson permitted it, and would she also kindly enquire whether the two young English ladies would deign to accompany her to such very poor entertainment as dining with her could afford? When finished, the note was despatched downstairs, and Austin was curiously impatient to hear the answer. It was Tuesday now, so that perhaps in two days he should see her again. He would scarcely have been pleased had he heard how the invitation was received by Grace.

Sibyl was delighted when Fräulein Hanson handed the letter to her, saying that the Professor was rather a bear, but harmless, and his wife made good cakes.

"Please, Grace, do say yes," said Sibyl, sitting down at her sister's feet and looking up in her face. "I declare I shall go without you if you do not. Why should we not enjoy ourselves a little?"

"But, suppose this visit leads to others?" said Grace, irresolutely. "Suppose we should get intimate with—"

"We might just as well become nuns at once. I believe you are thinking of those Englishmen, Grace, and you don't want to know them."

That was true enough. Grace wanted to know no one. New acquaintances might lead to harm.

"What harm could happen to us? Just think, Grace, we shall go with Fräulein Hanson, and there is the old lady besides."

"You know I want to go if you would like it, Sibyl, only—"

"Only what?"

"Suppose harm came of it?"

"What harm? Do you think I mean to run away with Mr. Jones?" said Sibyl, half angrily and half in fun.

"Oh, no, dear; of course not. That never entered my head. Well, then, let us go—it is my foolishness, but I shrink from seeing any English people. I wish Nan were here, she could tell us what was right. There! I won't say any more about it, Sibyl," and Grace kissed the pretty brow below her, and accepted the invitation.

A DEAD CITY OF ETRURIA.

ONE April morning I astonished my Roman landlady by getting up at half-past seven o'clock—a ridiculously early hour for the visitor—and declaring my intention to walk to Veii. She went away to mass with surprise in her face and in the motion of her shoulders. She had never yet entertained a stranger who had proposed to himself quite such an absurd feat of energy. For Veii is eleven good miles from Rome, and the old Etruscan city, or what is left of it, covers an area which may be five or six miles in circumference.

The goats from the Campagna were in the streets of Rome as I left the house and made my way to the Porta del Popolo, whence I was to follow the Via Cassia almost to my goal. It was cold to a marvel, considering that it was Italy. The brisk tinkling of the bells of the goats, as one by one they were relieved of their milk by householder after householder, seemed to argue that the herd were taking violent exercise to keep themselves warm. The church bells added to the music of the goats. It was a festa—the saint in whose honour it was held being too obscure for Protestant ears, but not without regard in the hearts of the Campagna peasantry, whom I met outside the Popolo Gate entering the city in gala dress. The other day I had traversed this same road for a couple of miles to the Roman race-course by the Tiber. The sport had been indifferent, the mud of the Tiberine meadows infamous, but the determination of the Romans to enjoy themselves outweighed all obstacles; nor was it at all abated by a smart fusillade of snow and hail showers at quick intervals. As for the horses, they were clearly out of humour with the work that was exacted of them. They almost stuck fast in the course they were required to cover. The pace was slow—

painfully slow; and there was little honour in victory under such conditions. What had interested me most, in fact, in these eccentric races was the conduct of a couple of English betting men, who had the audacity to tempt fortune, handicapped by a complete ignorance of Italian. They offered the odds in English, and so their clientèle was chiefly confined to certain sprigs of the nobility who had learnt enough English from their tutors for sporting purposes.

The wind blew keen from the snow of the Apennines when I had left Rome well behind me, and was breasting the first steep ascent of the many undulations which hereabouts compose the Campagna. It was a rough, forbidding day, with clouds over Soracte and the Alban Hills; but yet just the day to appreciate the Campagna aright. Of ruins on this side of Rome there are not many; but such as they were, they formed a romantic Æolian harp for the breeze to moan against. The refrain, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity," seemed to be whistled in my ears with growing intensity as I left the big dome of Saint Peter's farther and farther behind.

Not that the Campagna—at least in the immediate vicinity of Rome—need be so melancholy a district. The high road for a couple of miles isavenued by villa properties, each within its own compact little domain, and each approached by a path through the vines which stand beneath the high iron gate and the walls which keep it sequestered from common observation. But supposing four out of every five of the villas are to let. That makes the picture perfectly dolorous. And in effect that was the case; or if not wholly unoccupied, these dainty little bijou residences were used solely as a place of "villegiatura" for a month or two in the year. Not even the glow of the new green of the vines or the flush of the red anemones and blue hyacinths among the grass of the neglected meadows could make these empty houses cheerful. The wind whispered of devastating malaria as well as of the vanity which compassed them round about.

But the last of the villas being left in the rear, I found myself at length in the Campagna unadulterated. The spacious, irregular plain stretched for a dozen miles to the east without a tree, without even a hedge, and apparently without one house or shepherd's hut to relieve its nudity. To be sure it is not quite so forlorn as it appears to be; but one is justified in per-

petuating general impressions, and this barrenness is what most holds the eye and affects the mind. The flocks and herds which pick their living from the plain are of course inhabitants of a kind, and give a certain animation to the scene. But think for a moment how odd it would be if a girdle of country like this were to divide London from the outer world; if Nature were to take a great scythe and mow all the trees and habitations from the face of the earth in a circular band several miles broad, touching Hampstead and Hackney in the north, Peckham and Clapham in the south, Stratford in the east, and Hammersmith in the west! There are times when one has a sensation in Rome of living in a fortified city under a siege, the suburbs of which have been ravaged only the other day by a besieging force.

At the fourth milestone, however, I had become used to my surroundings. A glance of sunshine, too, had broken from the clouds to brighten the daisies of the Campagna, and to take the chill off the boisterous gale which continued to blow in my face. By the fifth milestone I saw Rome once more, the dome of Saint Peter's being like an epitome of it. Here, on a pedestal of bricks, there stands hoisted by the roadside an empty sarcophagus with sculptures in relief and an inscription. It has been called the tomb of Nero, a legend, like many other Roman legends, wholly incredible. Yet it does not matter whether the dust of Nero or of some more reputable Roman once rested here; it is enough that it is a tomb. There is a single white house in the neighbourhood, else the tomb would domineer the landscape.

I sat awhile on this empty marble coffin and whistled with the wind. A shepherd passed along with a flock of horned sheep following at his heels, and a big white dog that growled at my pendent legs. The shepherd was cloaked to the nose in his cloak, and slouched by with bent head. His sheep made a vile dust, which the wind carried against me in a choking cloud. I could see the daisies of the dun plain cowering before the successive blasts, and I listened to a fresh air which this same stont agent played upon an interstice of the coffin which served me as a seat.

From the fifth milestone to the eighth the road was much the same. The old basaltic pavement did not run continuously in the middle of the white high-

way. In places it was severed, but anon it reappeared and inspired new thoughts of the feet which have trodden it. For half an hour at a time I had the horizon to myself. This on the great north high road leading to the capital of Italy! No doubt the railway is responsible for the destitution of the Via Cassia. Still, it reflects the nature of the land through which it percolates. Were there thriving villages here and there all the way to Bracciano, and so on to Viterbo, there would be no lack of cheerful peasant traffic between village and village, or all the villages and the capital. But it is a dead country, which will need little short of a miracle to resuscitate it. We have nothing like it—and we may rejoice that it is so.

At last the inn of La Storta comes in sight. I have never been here before, but instinct tells me afar off that so massive an assemblage of dark walls and roofs cannot be aught except the inn. In the olden days this was the beginning of the last stage to Rome. Coaches and post-chaises here had hearty rendezvous, and no doubt it was customary to look to the priming of pistols in readiness for the final and most dangerous part of the road.

Some boys, with asses laden with brushwood, confirmed my belief. They were crooning a song as eerie as that of the wind itself when I stopped them. And, tailing after them, was a miserable pony with red sores spread upon its back, and all the hair flogged off its hindquarters by the friction of whips and staves. These lads, too, were attended by a dog, and this dog also resented my presence upon the high road.

A jug of wine in the old inn was welcome refreshment after my two hours' walk. The landlord was glad of the chance of a gossip. There was not a soul to be seen or heard except himself; and he sat on the solid bench in the low-browed room and plied me with questions of divers kinds. But remembering the heavy task yet before me, I could not tarry more than a few minutes, though I stayed long enough to assure him that his wine merited more patronage than it was likely to receive.

A mile past La Storta I turned by a lane to the right, and descended tortuously towards a depression in the Campagna. Soon there was a break in the red banks which served as walls to the road, and below I could see a castellated pile of buildings, with a river-bed at its base, and beyond a

plateau, bounded by the river's course, for the most part rude as the Campagna in general, but with one curious conical mound in the distance tufted with a single pine. The plateau was Veii, and the castellated building the nucleus of the modern village of Isola Farnese, or "the island belonging to the Farnese family." I stepped briskly down, and then ascended into the village itself, glad that part of my expedition was done, and eager to see what so remote and picturesque a place could give me to eat. Had I been less hungry, I might there and then have amused myself by reproducing in fancy the scenes that took place here so constantly some two thousand five hundred years ago. The plateau was then a city—some think the chief city of Etruria. Rome was then young and mightily jealous of Etruria and of Veii in particular. Again and again her armies sat in siege of Veii. The upland upon the other side of the river was no doubt their camping ground; thence they could see into the city itself, watch the movements in its camp and the processions of priests and victims approaching its temples. But for many a decade they were powerless to humble this mighty place, and they were fortunate to be able to retrace their steps to Rome with but a small proportion of loss.

However, I postponed reflections of this kind, and having crossed the stream, and climbed by several obvious tombs of old days—now available rather as stables for kine and asses—I entered the miserable little village just as the dilapidated clock of its church chimed five as an intimation that it was eleven.

It is in every sense a miserable place. During the summer it is deserted by most of its inhabitants, who do not care for the virulence of its malaria. Some go to Rome, which, though bad enough at such a time, is yet better than Veii; others withdraw to the west coast; and one family, with the members of which I held a brief conversation, do not scruple to cross the peninsula as far as Ancona, where they ply their trade of cobbler until the autumn is well through, and they conceive they may safely return to their native nest.

There is no inn here. I thought myself entitled, therefore, to appeal to the hospitality of the likeliest house in the village. Here I found an elderly woman, who was too surprised at first by my request to say either yes or no to it. But there were

certain youths in my wake who did not fail to urge her to be civil, making mention of the emolument that was likely to accrue to her. So a lump of whitey brown bread was brought forward, and half-a-dozen eggs were collected from various establishments, and another jug of wine was set on the table. For company's sake, I invited my neighbours to join me; but, save one, they all civilly declined the feast. The exception was a stalwart youth with a bundle on his shoulder—a deserter from the army, as he confided to me over his cup, bound to an outlying cottage to pay a stealthy visit to his relations and his sweetheart. It was not much of a repast, but I have eaten worse; and I should carry sufficiently agreeable memories of my hostess in my mind, if she had not managed to palm off upon me, in exchange for my piece of gold, two obsolete dollars, which I found subsequently were each worth one-tenth less than their nominal value.

Meanwhile a guide had been requisitioned to lead me about the site of ancient Veii, and to show me the famous Etruscan sepulchre, called the Grotta Campana—named after its discoverer—which is the only very strong and impressive witness for us of the nineteenth century of these long-dead Etruscans. I have said that the Campagna is, as a rule, without trees. When I think of Veii I am forced to make an exception in its favour. The brushwood upon the surface of the plateau, and particularly upon the steep inclines of it, where it falls to the River Formello, was so dense that we had almost to cleave our way through it. But it had many charms that made me forgetful temporarily of the city I had walked forth to see. Its grass was bright with the largest anemones I have ever beheld, crimson, and pale blue, and white; and the violets gave quite a hyacinthine glow to the green. But my small guide was averse to the brushwood, and declined to let me tarry in it. He prattled of vipers as the commonest—indeed, the only—denizens of the thickets.

"Where, oh, boy, is this great city?" I was fain to ask when we had walked for half an hour, and had covered nearly two miles of space from the village.

"Sir," replied the youth, "there is nothing of it left; or if there is anything, it is underground. They are digging this day in the other direction, and, if you wish it, we will go to see what they have found when we have seen the Grotta."

Ah, to be sure, the "Grotta" is Veii. Without this tomb, cut in the solid rock at the end of an artificial passage also channelled in the rock and overarched with brambles, and ivy, and the roots of shrubs, even the imagination would have an empty field of interest here.

But by this time we had crossed the plateau diagonally, and descending and again crossing the pellucid stream, the aperture of the tomb was before us.

I confess without shame that I held my breath when the lad turned the key of the heavy iron-plated door which guards the tomb, and opened the way for me to enter. There was a rush of damp, dank air, and the dark mouth of the sepulchre was declared. For the moment I saw nothing; but as my eyes grew accustomed to the gloom, I could discern the fragments of urns and ironwork, which still littered the ground. When the tomb was exposed in 1842 for the first time, there was a skeleton on each of the two stone benches, which are chiselled out of the solid rock. The urns were set by the side of the skeletons, and there were lamps of bronze also by the bones. But, of course, the dead ancients rapidly fell to dust as the fresh air of heaven reached them after their long immurement of more than a score of centuries. Ruin has also overtaken much of the pottery which had been entombed with them. Nevertheless, the moment when one makes acquaintance for the first time with such a tomb as this is rather a solemn one.

It is the fresco work upon the walls of the sepulchre which give it its chief interest. For aught that probability can urge in opposition, here we have paintings contemporary with those of Phidias or Zeuxis. It is no uncommon thing to see a statue a couple of thousand years old; but a picture of the same age, the fragments of which have still a certain freshness, is a rarity indeed. Alas! however, this vaunt is likely soon to be quite inapplicable to the Grotta of Veii. When the tomb was first disclosed, the colours were really vivid. Fifty years of partial exposure to the air has done much to obliterate both the colours and the outline of the drawing.

As for the subjects of these pictures dedicated to the dead, conjecture has it all its own way. You distinguish the naked forms of men and boys, and the spotted bodies of divers nondescript beasts, all marching in procession; but there is

no clue to the story they might unfold. One of the animals has the characteristics of a sphinx; another may be a curious long-legged horse, upon which a very small boy is set astride. There are suggestions of the tiger and the dog about certain of the other beasts; but suggestions only. There is no key to the riddle, however. All we can do is to call them venerable grotesques in red, yellow, and black. They may symbolise events in the life or after-life of the persons who were buried there, or they may not.

I should like to gossip a little longer about the tomb and its late inmates; but the boy, my guide, was impatient. We therefore locked up the Grotta and again ascended to the plateau of Veii. For a few yards we trod upon—nothing less than a pavement of basaltic flags, like those of the Roman roads in the Forum of Rome. This was an eloquent testimony of past power; but the tangle of briars and ilex scrub had covered the rest. Fancy, however, picked out the road for a mile or more under stones and superincumbent earth. A rock, too, with divers niches chiselled out of the face of it seemed to argue that here, at one time, was a place of votive offerings in the vicinity of the temple.

We were soon to have ample witness of another kind that there were temples in Veii in the old days. After a weary trudge we came upon a cut in the surface of the plateau. Several peasants were in the hole, and a clerk of the works was superintending their labour. What think you was the composition that they had thrown out of this hole in their burrowing? There was a little earth, but a much greater heap of fragments of earthenware, moulded into representations of heads, arms, legs, feet, rude figures of the internal and external human organs, and the like. It was as if the old inhabitants of Veii themselves were being brought to light in pieces.

There could be little doubt that the clerk of the works was right in his surmise that they were excavating upon the site of one of the chief temples of the old city. The various models of heads, legs, etc., were votive offerings dedicated to the gods of the Etruscans, even as in our day the present inhabitants of Etruria dedicate the same kind of offerings, done in wax or silver, to the Virgin or their favourite saint in acknowledgement of some petition accorded to them. Here was material for soliloquy, with a vengeance!

From one pit I passed to another, and beheld the bases of columns which once, no doubt, were part of the temples of Veii. The men dug and quarried in the ruins, and the red earth and every spadeful of débris contained a part of the vanished city.

But I had now to think of my return journey to Rome. I had walked eight or nine miles to and fro about Veii, and I had eleven more to cover ere I could give my feet the rest they began to crave.

Foolishly, I declined to return by the highway as I had come. The thought of its dulness and monotony induced me to put faith in my guide's assurances that it was not impossible for me to find my way to the great city by a more adventurous walk across the Campagna.

My temerity cost me three hours of considerable anxiety. I wandered from one little valley to another, crossed two or three streams knee-deep and populous with leeches, found myself in alarming proximity to flocks of sheep in the sole keeping of their dogs, went here and there at hazard for lack of a guide, and only when the day was fast waning had the luck to hit upon the precincts of a farm, where six sturdy peasant boys were ranged in a row, flailing the daisies from the grass of a field.

These lads saved me from a night on the Campagna, than which I think I would rather spend a night in jail. So it happened that towards seven o'clock I again set foot in my Roman lodging, and assured my landlady that I was as hungry as I was fatigued.

"A WILD IRISH GIRL."

IN TWO PARTS. PART II.

YEARS passed over in this hopeless way. Maria began to feel a dreadful despondency at the thought of her life going by in this fashion amid such scenes, and shrank from the life that was before her. There was no sign of a break in the clouds. Longing for a fair chance of extrication, she had a strong confidence in her own powers, and, given but the materials and a fair chance, she felt convinced that she would be successful. She was far above the semi-barbarians of her surroundings, and felt that she was intended for another sphere of life altogether.

In a remote part of the county lived an interesting, refined family, whom we shall

call the Granthams, and to whose house she had paid one long-cherished visit. Oh, what a vision of luxury and grace! The ladies were kind; indeed, they were some sort of distant relations, and the wife of the host, a handsome woman, took a particular fancy to Maria. Every year these great people travelled, and every year they found their way to the then highly fashionable and gay watering-place, Cheltenham. The scenes and pictures they described filled her with wistful longings. Oh, that it would enter their hearts to propose taking her! But that was the wildest of visions. They no doubt felt there was some incongruity, and this nice but rather wild Irish girl would scarcely "do, you see," and might be compromising. But they did not know her. The idea more and more took possession of her. She often took the faithful Captain, her uncle, who loved her, into confidence.

"And why not, Maria?" he would say. "I declare to goodness, if they only saw you in Cheltenham they'd all be polling for you! And haven't I friends of my own? Isn't there General Campbell and Colonel O'Malley? They'd take care of you. As for the dirty notes, leave all that to me."

These things to hear did she seriously incline. As for "the dirty notes," she had a plan of her own. The grandfather had left her a meagre legacy of two hundred pounds, three-quarters of which had been promptly disposed of by the family. The rest was on the eve of following. She made up her mind to take this slender sum and make the delightful venture under the charge of her Captain, who joyfully accepted all responsibility. What a flutter of preparations! A beautiful "sack" dress was bought in Shanagate, with a lovely "cart-wheel" Leghorn hat, such as was then in fashion. One joyful day they set off, and after much painful coaching and steaming reached the happy valley.

And here was Cheltenham at last! What novelty, what happiness, and what a change from Shinavea! There were already arrived the dear Granthams, and the admired and delightful Mrs. G. herself, then in the height of fashion, who insisted on being patroness, chaperon, everything to the new arrival, our Maria. The Captain, too, was there in his element, for here were the General and the Colonel, as foretold, who at once began to take the deepest interest in the niece of their friend.

And those Assembly Rooms! With

the music, and the dresses, and the fine company—what a change! And every one so good-natured, affable, and kind. She did not think that a handsome, brilliant young woman was ever welcome everywhere. The Captain's friends introduced their friends. Mrs. Grantham, who proved to be one of the leaders of "ton" in the place, made it easy for her in every way. The wonder was that she acquitted herself so well, could dance elegantly, talk without brogue—though all her family had the broadest and raciest accent—and had discretion to glide easily over, or avoid, all the doubtful places, which was owing to the spirit of purpose and tact which she retained through her life. Never was any one, as I had often reason to note, so imbued with one most precious principle, and which I make a present of here to the reader, an invaluable one, too: *Pour jour de la vie, il faut glisser sur beaucoup*. The foolish, worried or offended by "contrairy" matters, often stop in their course to do battle with them.

Among the General's and the Captain's friends we now find a rather important personage—a Member of Parliament—rich, flourishing, and slightly elderly. He was a widower with one little boy—not with him at Cheltenham—and had recently adopted politics with much promise of success. He was an agreeable, cultured man, though of somewhat formal manners, and was noted for his affectionate disposition. Looking up at his portrait, I see a large, placid forehead, and fair, delicately tinted face, with a finely expressive mouth. There is the usual high-collared blue coat with gilt buttons, a tall white neckerchief of many folds, the fob and watch ribbon, and gold seals. It might, indeed, have passed for a portrait of the late George Canning, and had quite a statesman-like air. The Captain was not slow in introducing his friend, who was graciously courteous to Maria, and listened to her pleasantly naïve speeches. He was fond of dancing, and, though something past fifty, successfully trod the various measures then in fashion. Maria was his constant partner. Then followed festive meetings, picnics, and other amusements. It was, indeed, a jocund, halcyon time; but the sands began to run out, and, alas! faster than the sands, her little hoard. Cheltenham was not exactly an economical watering-place. The Captain, however, was positive that his Maria had captured the statesman, and vowed that the General and Colonel—great judges—had said so too.

"And why not, Maria?" he said, simply. "A fine girl is a match for the Duke of York himself! Never mind the money; I'll get Cockburn here to lend me twenty pounds to bring us back, and there's some shot in the locker still," he added, shaking his little steel purse.

This was encouraging; but still the time went by and the stately gentleman did not travel out of his good-natured manner. There was another lady of a more showy metal and methods, with whom he seemed to divide his attentions, and whose merits he would even discuss with Maria. Nor must it be supposed that she was, as it is called vulgarly, "setting her cap" at this great parti. As she often declared, she was won by his refined manners, thoughtfulness, and kind delicacy to her in all matters. But still, as our neighbours say, "the thing did not walk."

At last, one morning she had ruefully to take counsel with herself over the situation. It was clear, but too clear, that she must return to Shinavea and her relations, and return at once, to bear as best she could their reproaches or rallyings on her failure. For such it was. More chilling still was the disappointment—for such she owned it to be—and the complete mistake she had made. Then there was the rueful journey back. But with her brave heart she took due count of the situation, and found nothing to reproach herself with. She had done what she had thought was her duty; she had made the gallant attempt, and had miscalculated her powers. She would now return, adapt herself wholly to the rude, natural life evidently destined for her, and never again be beguiled into ambitious efforts.

In this wholesome spirit a day was fixed for departure, and even the Captain ruefully enough acknowledged that it was the only thing to do. Having settled the matter, she went more cheerfully to her packing up what the Captain called "her little kit."

Going down the promenade the day before her departure, she came on Mr. Grainger, her statesman-like friend. She greeted him cordially. He turned back with her. "What's this?" he said. "They tell me that you're going away."

"Yes," she answered, with affected gaiety; "and is it not time? We cannot remain here for ever, much as we would like it."

"I am sorry," he said, calmly; "very sorry; then paused. "Is there anything

that could induce you to stay here longer?"

"I fear not," said Maria, quite innocently.

He went on deliberately:

"Suppose I were to make it a request of you to stay here—to stay with me—here—always?"

Was she dreaming? Could she trust her ears? Oh, the delight, the rapture of that morning; the change from the depression of that morning! And oh, Shinavea—when the news gets to Shinavea, what will they all say? Never could she forget that delicious surprise and the alternation from despondency—so sudden and delightful.

"I may tell you now," said Mr. Grainger, in the same quiet, business-like way, "what I have to offer you—just seven thousand a year, and I am sure we shall be happy and comfortable on that."

They were, it seems, to journey home together—Maria, the Captain, and Mr. Grainger. This arrangement may seem a little odd now; but "*autres temps, autres mœurs*." They even went over to see Stratford-on-Avon, and here our poor Captain, wishing "to do the thing in style," and keep up the credit of the family before the new connection, got quite "run out," as he despondently said, and, coming to Liverpool, found himself without anything to pay their passage over. "Not to save his soul," as he said, would he have "let on" to this great friend that their exchequer was exhausted. So he quietly applied to his faithful gold chronometer and seals, and managed it in that convenient way. Even this was hardly enough; but he could rely on other devices in the good cause.

Meanwhile, to Maria's astonishment and alarm, he was all the way expatiating to his friend on the ancestral domains which spread away round Shinavea, the luxurious mode of living maintained by the family, the carriages, horses, and general state, which foolish boasts later brought its own Nemesis in the shape of Mr. Grainger's self-invitation to Shinavea, to see all these wonders. He would repair forthwith there to announce the news in person "as a surprise," and obtain a paternal blessing. He was always a pleasantly good-humoured man, and later laughed long and loud over the Captain's fictions.

"But what was the use of it, my dearest Maria," he said, gravely enough, "as I was certain to know the truth very soon? Surely it was only you I sought. I had fortune enough for us both; then why

resort to these embellishments? The first glance I had of the paternal domain I saw the true state of affairs." She could only plead, "Poor Nunkey means well. But they all talk that way at home."

Again he laughed heartily at this excuse. This slight trait brings his character well before me. He had a mind superior to all trifles, large and generous, and, like her, "glided always over trifles."

So that old and old-fashioned picture of Cheltenham fades out. So vividly has it been brought before me by her many recitals, that I seem to have lived there; to know the people; to have attended the Assembly Rooms, and drank the waters. But we will here let the drop scene descend, and pass on to a new act and a fresh era in Maria's life.

There was a sensation in the Graingers' county when the new, handsome bride arrived at her pretty place called Riverside, and many were the balls and entertainments given in her honour. It was a change indeed from Shinavea and its people. Riverside was a rather important place, with handsome gardens, and no less than two great squares or courts. There was a curious so-called library with painted Gothic windows, which had formerly been a chapel. Here Maria lived in state. There was one member of the family of Mr. Grainger to whom the change was not at all grateful. This was his one sister, Mrs. Blake, widow of an officer, who had up to this time "looked after" everything, and watched over Charley, the young son and heir. She was a strange being enough, large and red-faced, violent in her passions and temper, and with much of the resentful feeling which is found in the lower classes of her country. Yet she had plenty of what is called "good heart," and strong affections for her brother and for her charge. The new alliance she looked on as a folly, and did not spare her sarcasms and reproaches.

"You, an elderly—an old man, to marry a girl! People gave you credit for more sense; and my late sister's poor, poor boy! Mark my words, she will hate him."

He, however, took all this in his own good-humoured way. "Come, come, Margaret, you must get to like her."

"Never," was her reply, and our mother was destined later to find here a sore trial, and even persecution. But she did her best to win over this sister-in-law. Her stepson, a lad of ten or twelve years, "took

to her" at once, and for forty or fifty years treated her with filial devotion and affection.

What a new, delightful life it was for her! It was almost bewildering in its variety and enjoyment. Mr. Grainger was the most indulgent of husbands. Her ready tact soon showed her how to adapt herself to all his tastes, though at first the change from the free, roving style of manners at Shinavea was a little perplexing. There was a good deal of comedy in this situation, and many little touches in Miss Austen's manner: as when with much formality and state, a light refection was carried up to her rooms, with a single small glass of wine, Mr. Grainger's ideal of the most that a lady of refinement could require! This was a grotesque contrast with the free butt of claret, and the liberal "jugs" which were in vogue at Shinavea, and made her laugh heartily. A more serious difficulty was her finding sympathy and appreciation for Mr. Grainger's elegant tastes. He had travelled a great deal, could speak foreign tongues fluently, had lived in Rome, where he had been a patron of Thorwaldsen, one of whose works, a beautiful Hebe, had been a commission, and was now standing in a niche in the corridor. There were other statues and many good paintings, some purchased at Malmaison, which, however admirable, were rather unintelligible to the bride from Shinavea. Indeed, had the Hebe found her way thither, she was more than likely to have served as an excellent target for pistol practice. He also could read Italian and French, and had a good library of works in these tongues. But her tact and good purpose were such that in time she acquired not only taste, but a most elegant taste, which almost extended to everything, and when she admired or bought, she had almost infallible taste in choosing what was best, most suitable, and most becoming, and the best value, too. In matters of dress she was really incomparable. There was nothing she insisted on so much as the magic power of dress. A well-dressed man or woman had everything, she maintained, in his or her favour. "Shabby clothes" were a self-refutation, and so many irresistible arguments against the wearer's worth.

Mr. Grainger was passionately fond of music, and a cultivated amateur. He was good-naturedly tolerant to the musical efforts of Shinavea, and listened kindly to

"Where are you wandering, my pretty maid?" But she felt at once that this was not his style exactly. The opera—and those were the days of Persiani, Tamburini—he idolised, and it was his delight to make her share all his transports. In Paris, "Don Giovanni" had just been brought out, and was all the rage; and she used to tell us the rather wearying probation she had to go through listening to this new and somewhat unintelligible language. At every fine passage she found his eyes fixed upon her in a sort of rapture, while he expected a responsive enthusiasm, which she was amiable enough to simulate. His delight, too, was to fill his house with a gathering of wholly or semi-professional persons, who took possession in the free and easy fashion of their order, and played and sang into the small hours. Here was more comedy, for in his enthusiasm he assumed in her a corresponding ardour, and would have particular pieces especially performed for her. She had not the heart or courage to withdraw herself from this rather severe discipline. She indeed came to dread these musical treats, which a word from her would have disposed of.

It was pleasant always to put together the elements of this really fine and delicately wrought character from his wife's descriptions. As I have said, he was double her age, yet it was likely that no one of her own age would have shown the same unwearied thoughtfulness and unselfishness. Never during his life did a harsh word or rebuke ever escape him; but on any matter that met his disapproval there was in his manner something that was beyond severity of language. A little quick in impulse and high-spirited, the lady of Shinavea, as she often impressed on us, when ready with some wayward speech, felt ashamed to utter it in that calm, irresistible presence. He would not, in fact, see or recognise the possibility of such a thing as a dispute or quarrel. How fine was this principle!

A man of such a character was certain to advance in the world. He made hosts of friends, highly influential ones—political and others—and made his way in Parliament, though not distinguished as a speaker. He was ambitious, however, and before his death was assured of office, and had the promise that an old baronetcy in his family should be revived. He knew many celebrated persons. Our mother

used often to relate how when walking in the Park he said to her, "Note this man who is approaching; look your best, for he is a very remarkable man." This was a dark, richly dressed, not to say dandified, young man, who was introduced as "Mr. Bulwer." All the world was then talking of "Pelham." She often described the impression this elegant personage made upon her, and used to repeat the no less elegant compliment which he paid her—after the fashion of the day.

By this time there were three children—a boy and two girls. So "Aunt Blake" might fairly shake her head and condole with "poor Charley," whose nose, as she affected to consider, "was put out of joint for ever." This made no difference, as may be imagined, and the whole family was truly harmonious. By this time the head of Shinavea House had passed away, and the inhabitants had changed generally. The son and successor had now "come into his property," small as it was, while the widow and her daughters had gone to foreign parts for economic living, and had settled themselves at Dieppe, where there was then a huge English colony of refugees; there they had a pleasant, jovial time enough, and with this change in the family circumstances we may bring this sketch of our mother to an end.

ONE-POUND NOTES, GUINEAS, ETC.

If the scheme of the Chancellor of the Exchequer is carried out, we shall soon have one-pound notes in circulation, and the familiar, useful sovereign—never too familiar—may be extensively replaced by the crisp and rustling note. To begin with, we shall be rather puzzled to give the new-comer a name. The "fiver" and the "tenner" we are acquainted with, anyhow by repute, but to call the fresh arrival a "oner" might lead to confusion, as that word has already a popular significance of his own. What was the custom of our forefathers in this respect, it may be asked. For as most people know, if only from the familiar snatch:

I'd rather have a guinea than a one-pound note, the new note, if it comes, will be only a revival.

The one-pound note began its existence in the throes of the great war with France in 1797, accompanied by its twin brother

the two-pound note. Of this last one does not hear much, and probably it never attained an extensive circulation. The "promises to pay" of the Bank of England, from its first foundation in 1694, were doubtless for good round sums. We read that two years after its foundation, its rivals, the goldsmiths, "keeping running cashes," who were the original bankers of the community, were so jealous of the success of the new institution as to promote a run upon it. On this occasion the directors were fain to pay their notes only in part, endorsing the amount paid, and to request their over-anxious creditors to "call again" another day. It was only in 1759 that notes under twenty pounds in value were first circulated, and so little was this innovation relished by the ruling powers, who seem to have feared that the increased circulation of bank-notes would create a scarcity in gold, that in 1775 the Bank was prohibited from issuing notes under twenty pounds, although two years afterwards the limit was reduced to five pounds.

The year 1797, in which the one-pound note made its first appearance, was, perhaps, the most critical that England has ever passed through. The French Republic had gone forth to conquer like a young giant. Carnot, the great war minister, whose descendant is now the President of the French Republic, had organised victory in every quarter, and General Buonaparte was beginning his wonderful career of triumph.

Fleets and armies were in preparation for the invasion of England; Ireland was ripe for rebellion; there was mutiny in the fleet; and to crown all, a monetary panic threatened ruin to all the banks and great financial houses throughout the country. On Saturday, the twentieth of February, when the Bank of England closed for the day, there was only a million and a quarter left in the Bank cellars, a sum which would barely suffice for the demands of another day of panic. The Government was as vitally concerned as the Bank. A Cabinet Council was hastily summoned, and met on the Sunday. On Monday the crowd of people who awaited the opening of the Bank doors were met with the announcement of an Order in Council, and a Royal Proclamation wet from the press ordering the suspension by the Bank of all payments in cash. The measure, desperate as it seemed, actually restored public confidence. Bank of England notes were everywhere accepted

and circulated freely as legal tender, but the public convenience demanded an immediate supply of smaller notes, and another Order in Council authorised their issue. In a few days one and two-pound notes were engraved and printed, and at once issued in large quantities.

For the next twenty years these one-pound notes were the chief circulating medium throughout England. The country bankers were also permitted to issue their own notes of the same denomination. As for gold, people rarely saw it. The guinea, the half-guinea, and the seven-shilling piece, which were then the principal gold coins in use, were carefully hoarded by their possessors, or were only parted with at a profit. Yet the paper currency was never seriously depreciated. The pound note was always good for twenty shillings, and no one looked askance at it, unless to make sure that it was not forged.

Forgery was the great trouble of the time; and the hasty manner in which the original one-pound notes had been engraved and issued facilitated the operations of the forgers. Nothing was easier than to pass a one-pound note; at any shop a trifling purchase would afford the means of changing such a note, which would often pass from hand to hand undetected, until scanned by the keen eyes of the bank official, when, of course, the last holder had to bear the loss.

Up to the time of the introduction of the one-pound note, forgery of the Bank's issues had not been frequent. The Bank had existed for more than sixty years before the first forger of its notes was convicted. More cases occurred when a lower denomination of note was issued; and in 1773 the counterfeiting of the water-mark of the paper was made a capital offence, the death penalty having been previously reserved for those connected with the engraving and printing of the notes. The forgeries of old Patch in 1784 were the most serious of their time. By the ingenuity of his disguises, and his care in executing all his forgeries without accomplices, for a long time he defied detection. He was discovered at last by accident. Having amassed considerable wealth by his practices, he was in the habit of giving dinner-parties to his genteel neighbours; and to make a good show he would borrow a quantity of silver plate from a neighbouring pawnbroker, leaving the full value in forged bank-notes as security for its

safe return. It happened, however, one day that the pawnbroker was in desperate need of money, and having lent out his plate on the usual terms, he made for the Bank of England to cash his customer's notes. At the Bank the forgery was at once detected, and the man arrested, when he disclosed the facts of the case, and the Bow Street runners made a descent upon Mr. Patch's house and captured him. The man escaped a capital sentence by hanging himself in his cell.

With the introduction of small notes there arose a great and sudden increase in the crime of forgery. During the six years previous to the introduction of the "ones" there had been only one sentence of death for forging bank-notes. In the year that followed there were eighty-five capital convictions. The severity of the punishment had no effect in checking the prevalence of the crime. In 1808 a regular manufactory of forged notes was discovered in Birmingham. They were sold for export, to be used in the countries where our armies were at once fighting and paying their way, and where commissaries and contractors had familiarised the natives with English currency. They were ordered and invoiced under the name of candlesticks, numbers one, two, or five—according to the value represented by the forged notes, which were sold at the rate of six shillings in the pound—along with other hardware. The trouble with forged notes went on during the whole of the period of inconvertible issues, and in the twenty years of its duration hundreds of human victims were sacrificed for the good of the currency. At Newgate, on hanging mornings, poor wretches convicted of forgery were hung in batches, as many as a dozen at once. Such a sight was seen by George Cruikshank, the great caricaturist, one morning; there were eleven sufferers aligned upon the scaffold, two of them being women; and it was with the horror of it working in his brain that he designed and drew that inimitable model of a one-pound note that gives one a cold shiver even now—the victims on the scaffold; Britannia, in the medallion, busily devouring her children; the £ of the note formed of the hangman's rope; the manacled prisoners seen in the window of Newgate; fetters and irons forming the ornamentation, and the whole subscribed, "Jack Ketch." The engraving was published by William Hone, and exhibited in his shop on Ludgate Hill, close to the scene of the hang-

ings; it drew crowds about the window. The Bank directors were furious, and would gladly have prosecuted the audacious artist. But public opinion was on his side, and the print worked powerfully in aid of the movement for abolishing the death penalty for forgery and the like; an object eventually attained in the year 1832.

It is not likely, indeed, that the introduction of one-pound notes in the present day will give rise to any such epidemic of forgery. But the danger is a serious one, and should be guarded against by the production of a note which will defy the arts of the forger to produce a successful counterfeit. It must be remembered that the progress of science has given the counterfeiter many new processes, which require the aid of the chemist, as well as the machinist, successfully to counteract.

A curious case occurred in the year 1819, which has some bearing on the history of bank notes. A man was brought before a Bow Street magistrate for passing a bad one-pound note, which had been detained at the Bank, and an inspector from the head office was in attendance to produce the note and prove it a forged one. The accused person requested to be allowed to examine the note, and on its being handed to him quickly pocketed the note, offering the prosecutor its value in silver. The magistrate declined to interfere, and the incriminated person departed in triumph. From that time forth the Bank ceased to detain a forged note when presented in the ordinary course of business, and contented itself with stamping the note with the word "Forged," repeated in four distinct impressions in the form of a cross, or arranged like the sails of a mill. This suggests a true story of later date of a farmer who had paid a note into the local bank, which in due course was returned from the Bank of England, marked with the fatal inscription "Forged." A clerk from the local bank was sent up the hill to the farm, to return the note and reclaim the amount. The farmer, an illiterate man, scanned the note earnestly, not at all inclined to own himself its former possessor, and catching sight of the stamp, he exclaimed joyously: "No, that was never mine. There was no windmill on the note I gave you."

Closely connected with the history of the great struggle between England and Napoleon is the story of the one-pound note. At the close of the war, the Bank

of England resolved to resume cash payments as soon as possible. People who had buried or hoarded their guineas now brought them to light, to secure the trifling premium which they still were worth. In 1817 the Bank undertook to pay all its one and two-pound notes on demand; but it was not till four years later that full specie payments were resumed. The one-pound note had fulfilled its mission for the time, it had powerfully aided in bringing the country in safety through a fearful ordeal. But the financial authorities were strongly against small notes, and it was determined to call them in, and the process was concluded in the year 1822, when the staff of the Bank was considerably diminished. For the one-pound note gave a good deal of trouble, and necessitated a staff of clerks to register its issue and subsequent history.

The notes of those days were issued again and again, and acquired a good deal of dirt in passage from hand to hand, just as the Scotch one-pound notes do now. The superior crispness and brightness of the Bank of England note is due to the fact that when once it reaches headquarters again, its career is ended. But it does not follow that it would pay to pursue the same course with one-pound notes, as the cost of production might be too serious. The Scotch banks make each note last three or four years, till they arrive at a state of blackness in which they are called colliers, when they—the notes, that is—are finally put to repose.

Again there came a year of panic, 1825, a panic which followed a period of inflation, and of wild speculation in foreign loans and all kinds of produce. A general run followed on the banks throughout the country, and such was the scarcity of coin, that the most solvent concerns with difficulty kept afloat. Seventy-three private banks—no joint-stock banks then existed—and among them seven or eight London firms of repute, had, in the course of one month, suspended payment. A general ruin seemed imminent, and the most urgent appeals for assistance reached the Bank of England from all quarters. But the Bank cellars were almost empty. It was even reported that it was unable to cash a cheque for sixty thousand pounds, and it was doubtful whether the Bank could stand another day, and the stoppage of the Bank meant national bankruptcy and universal discredit and confusion.

From this terrible danger the country

was saved by the discarded and despised one-pound note. Some one of the officials bethought him of the existence of a certain box containing a number of uncanceled one-pound notes. The box was opened; it proved a veritable Pandora's box, for it contained seven hundred thousand one-pound notes. The sanction of the Government was at once obtained for their issue, and supplies of them were forwarded in all directions to the overstrained banks which still held out. The one-pound note worked like a charm.

The sight of it was enough to still the panic. A pile of one-pound notes on the counter was enough to satisfy the most clamorous claimants. The run was stayed, customers brought back their balances, and those who came to draw remained to pay.

In country places there long remained traditions of that wonderful panic, which overspread the country as hardly any other has done, before or since. We have heard of one stalwart country banker, who, with empty till, but with the hope of a supply by the next coach, held the entrance to his bank as a fort, cajoling some and shouldering away others, and keeping everybody at bay till the coach arrived with the welcome supplies, which were borne across to the bank with loud cheers, when the run came to a sudden end.

Another gentleman happened to have ordered from the Mint a box of new farthings, which was broken open on the bank floor; and the sight of the clerks shovelling up the bright coins, which everybody supposed to be gold, at once restored the public confidence. This incident has been made use of in fiction, but it is actual fact all the same.

With the grand final performance of "saving the country," the history of the one-pound note approaches its end. But it is curious to note how its last appearance was sanctioned by the Government, with the proviso that the authorities of the Bank "shall take opportunity to procure a greater fund of treasure." This seems also to be the mission of the one-pound note of the future—to establish, that is, a reserve of gold, the existence of which may calm the nerves of the body financial in time of pressure.

The one-pound note did not retire altogether from circulation till the year 1834, when county banks, as well as the Bank of England, were constrained to withdraw

them from circulation. Henceforth the chief circulating medium was to be:

Gold, gold, gold, gold,
Heavy to get and light to hold.

The guinea, however, with which the one-pound note had started on its career, had disappeared long before. The coin itself was of the time of the Restoration. But by a curious coincidence it had a precursor in gold coins of the Plantagenet era, called *guiennois*, from the province of Guienne, in which they circulated as well as in England. But the later guineas were so called because coined in gold from the Guinea Coast. The Royal order for the first coinage of guineas, dated in 1663, sets this out clearly enough, and directs that they shall be marked "with a little elephant in some convenient place," to show their origin. And soon we hear of the fleet detained at Portsmouth by contrary winds, on some expedition against the Dutch, and the young Duke of Monmouth, who is in command, pushing the "Guinea gold" merrily about the gaming table, and wanting further supplies.

The coin seems to have been originally designed to represent twenty shillings; but owing to the wretched state of the silver coinage, it came to be worth thirty shillings in 1696, and only fell from this eminence when the silver coinage was remodelled—thanks to Lord Halifax and Sir Isaac Newton—in that same year. With these solid English guineas did Dutch William carry on his wars; and it was in conducting a supply of the needful guineas to the King at the siege of Namur that the governor of the Bank, venturing into the trenches to pay his respects to his Majesty, was killed by a cannon-ball.

The guinea has retained a hold in popular imagination which no other coin can rival. Although it was abolished as legal currency in 1817, under a new currency Act which installed the sovereign in its place, we often hear of it still as an expression of value. From pounds to guineas is a bid often heard in auction rooms. The physician cherishes the memory of the guinea in his fee, just as the lawyer, in his traditional six-and-eightpence, retains the half "mark," by which he formerly reckoned. Our three-year-olds, too, still race for the Guineas; and the guinea this and the other is an affair frequently to be met with in advertisements. It is a word that goes trippingly on the tongue, and has no ambiguous meaning, like pound or sovereign. Yet the last is the more ancient

coin, and was in existence in Elizabeth's reign. Connected with the guinea was the pistole—a coin in considerable circulation at the end of the seventeenth century. Among the requirements of a shopkeeper of that date we find a guinea weight and a pistole weight. Curiously enough, too, the pistole still survives as a term of account among horse-dealers, and in Continental horse-fairs you may continually hear offers made and bargains struck in pistoles, although there is no existing coin of that denomination.

But if we go further into the matter of coinage in gold we shall come to angels, and rose-nobles, and even florins and gold pennies; but perhaps we have gone far enough in that direction, and had better return to the prosaic £ s. d.

LITTLE WHITE-CAP.

A STORY IN NINE CHAPTERS.

By BARBARA DEMPSTER.

Author of "*Mrs. Dane's Lady-Help*," "*The Bridge House*," "*Tabitha's Choice*," etc., etc.

CHAPTER V.

"I SAW her about two years ago—a few months before she came to live here with her aunt—in a little French sea place called Portreux. She was staying there as a married woman. There was a child—a baby of about a month old. Cecilia and I were passing through Portreux. We were only there a few hours, and it was while we were on the sands in the afternoon that I saw Miss Saltmarsh, as she calls herself, sitting with her—husband and the child in one of those little cabins that French people hire for the season. Perhaps I should not have noticed them, only the lady who was with me, and who was staying a week or two at Portreux, pointed them out to me as a young English couple who had come there a few days before, and who seemed to wish to keep themselves apart from, at any rate, any English who might be there. They came in to dine one night at the table d'hôte of the hotel in which my friend was staying, and she had tried to get into conversation with them, being struck by the extreme delicacy and prettiness of—Miss Saltmarsh. But her advances had not been responded to with any cordiality, and after that they apparently dined somewhere else, or at another time, for she did not see them at the hotel again. But they

spent almost the whole day in the little cabin on the sands. I think there is no need to say any more. Certainly every one must agree that, at any rate, that past should be explained before Miss Saltmarsh is received in decent society as an unmarried girl."

"Most certainly it should."

Dacre, staring moodily out of his aunt's boudoir window at the Hall, a few days after the Vicarage At Home, felt that it should be so, with every beat of what was good and chivalrous in his heart. It was intolerable that any woman a man respected—loved—should stand before the world with such a past unexplained.

He made one sick, desperate effort to give an explanation himself.

"There was no reason why she should not have been married," he said; "and the husband might have turned out a brute, and she may have wished to forget everything that was connected with him," he added, with a savage laugh. "The world is always so very charitable."

"That may be," said Mrs. Dacre, coldly; "but it seems scarcely probable. No matter how bad a man is, his wife, if there is nothing against her, keeps his name, and wears her wedding ring, and does not go back to her maiden name, and pretend that she has never had another. Why should she, if her life is innocent, and she has been only sinned against instead of sinning? Besides, your theory of the brutal husband hardly holds good. They seemed devoted to each other at that time. My friend had noticed their devotion, and that was but a short time before the girl came here. And then the child——"

"That may be dead," roughly.

"Very true."

"And you might have made a mistake. There are curious likenesses amongst people."

"Miss Saltmarsh's was not a face one could easily forget. She was wearing at the time one of those white French sea-side caps—a beret—such as she wears now."

Little White-cap. With her country-side nickname there rose up in the gallant Captain's mind a recollection of the dainty head that the pretty, quaint cap crowned, and then he bit his lip till the blood came. It was only a trifle, but that cap seemed in some subtle way to spoil his own efforts to clear her fair name more than any of the cold arguments of his aunt.

If that past—that man had become so insufferable to her, would she wear continually an object which could not fail to evoke that French seaside place every time she looked at it? The sharpness of his doubt and pain made him entirely unreasonable.

"It is a disgusting world," he said. "Why should it take such a delight in rushing to throw stones at a poor defenceless girl? Why, the whole country-side has had a fling at her, and she has been cut dead this week by every one who has met her. It is enough to make a fellow sick!"

"It is very chivalrous of you to champion her cause like this," said his aunt, with a faint sneer in her well-bred voice, taking up her book, as if she had had enough of the subject. "But if Cecilia, for instance, were your sister, would you like her to be an intimate friend of a woman who, having such a past as that, would give no explanation of it? Miss Saltmarsh could, no doubt, easily clear herself. She has had nearly a week to do it in. Neither she nor her aunt has taken any steps to clear up the mystery, though they have had the opportunity. Mrs. Gay called there expressly to see them the day after her At Home, but was not admitted. And now, James, let me say something for myself." She raised her clear, cold eyes to his, her voice vibrating with indignation. "I know you are giving me credit for having brought all this on that unfortunate girl; but, at least, if you have no respect for Cecilia as your cousin, you might take into consideration a mother's feeling, and remember that but for my care, Cecilia, who has been guarded as much as has been in my power from every touch of evil, might have been on intimate terms with Priscilla Saltmarsh. Men look at things differently, I know; but Cecilia is a sweet and innocent girl, and I would rather see her dead than associating with persons whose lives won't bear inspection."

A fierce fire flared up in Dacre's eyes at the last insinuation against Priscilla; but it died down again as he thought of the two girls. If that past of one of them could not be explained, would he himself care to see Cecilia associating—

Such thoughts were not pleasant to follow out to the end, and he left his aunt's boudoir in a savage and miserable frame of mind.

It was a bleak, windy afternoon. Winter had set in in earnest.

When Dacre started for a walk, he was scarcely conscious at first, in the moody perturbation of his mind, whither he was going. When he found himself on the edge of the quarry, he scarcely, so grey and cold it was, expected to find Priscilla there, though he knew now that ever since he had left his aunt some force had been steadily driving him to seek her.

The young man did not usually allow himself to be driven by his impulses. His life had hitherto been too selfish and worldly to allow him to act without first arguing out to himself the possible benefits that might accrue to him from any important act. He knew that he was probably playing the fool now; but the spell of Priscilla's fascination was upon him, and for once in his life, he felt that he could cast all worldly prudence aside, so that he might see her fair name cleared, and, holding her in his arms, kiss the memory of the humiliation she had gone through from her heart.

Though the gallant Captain did not know it, he was nearer being a wise man than he had ever been before in his life.

He had not once met Priscilla since that night at the Vicarage.

The expression of her face, when she overheard his aunt's speech, and her immediate departure from the house, had filled him with a horrible conviction that there was truth in the accusation his aunt had brought against her.

He had brooded over it and her conduct, avoiding the places where she knew he might meet her, and had even shrunk, with a cowardice unusual to him, from questioning his aunt as to the reason she had had for saying what she had done. He did not tell her that he and Priscilla had overheard her speech.

He did not want to be questioned, in his turn, as to how she had taken it. He could say with truth to his aunt that he had heard everybody talking about it, for it had become by this the talk of the country-side. Cecilia, too, he knew had heard of it; for, the night before, a lady who was dining with them, and who had only that afternoon returned to the neighbourhood from a visit to town, had mentioned Mrs. Joliffe and her niece, and a look of fine disdain had crossed Cecilia's face. Certainly the man who married Cecilia need have no fear of her making improper acquaintances, he had thought with a grim scorn. She was her mother's daughter. But now, remembering the pleasant, frank

friendship which had been between them, he wished that he had gone straight to Priscilla the very next day.

Bleak and grey as the November day was, Priscilla was there down in the quarry. As he descended the narrow pathway he caught sight of the white cap among the tangle of the bushes that grew thick in the old, disused quarry. At the sight of it a queer half revulsion of feeling against the pretty cap he had so much admired set in, and he vowed that if she could explain that past sufficiently clearly for him to ask her to be his wife, she should never wear it again.

As a turn in the path among the bushes brought her into full view, he saw that she was not amusing herself with her usual afternoon occupation of tea-making. The fire was unlit, and she was standing in dreaming thought, looking out across the bare, bleak country before her. The winter wind penetrated even this sheltered spot, and ruffled the hair under the white cap, and, catching the folds of her dress, exposed the prettiest of little feet and ankles.

But while Dacre took in the dainty grace of the figure, there was a certain suggestion of forlornness and loneliness about the solitary, wind-swept figure which touched him most deeply, and, for a moment, he felt quite equal to the ordeal of taking her, even as she was, and shielding her by his protection against all the darts of an evil-speaking world. Her face went very pale as she saw him, and set into hard, defiant curves, which confirmed in him the doubt as to the generosity and justice of his treatment of her. He saw by her eyes that she had noticed his avoidance of her during the past day or two, and resented it. Dacre was a courageous man in his way, but he was oddly afraid of this slender, bright-eyed girl. His opening was not lucky. He forgot for once his savoir faire as a man of the world.

"I haven't seen you for some days," he said, with an attempt at lightness.

"No," she said, quietly. Then, after a faint pause, "I have been here every day."

"I am very sorry not to have seen you," he said, a little unsteady; "but I came this afternoon hoping to find you here. I came to ask you a question."

She looked at him unflinchingly, though the colour rushed scarlet over her face. But she made a mistake. The question he asked her was not the one she expected. A moment later he was possessed once

more with a sense of her beauty, and was pouring out to her, in broken, hurried sentences, the story of his love, winding up by asking her to be his wife.

She stared at him as if petrified; incredulous amazement, pity, self-shame, and anger struggling in her eyes.

"Captain Dacre—this is dreadful. I thought," she gasped, "your cousin—Miss Dacre——"

"I have never asked her to be my wife," he pleaded, eagerly. "I am free—and I thought that you half understood the other night," a faint note of injured reproach in his voice.

She crimsoned again.

"Perhaps it was foolish of me; but I thought—forgive me if I misunderstood you—but I thought it was only something you were saying on the spur of the moment; some of the nonsense men say sometimes—to women. Oh, I am so sorry; but I knew you were almost engaged to your cousin, and thought it was only a foolish speech for which you would be sorry an hour later."

"But I meant it," he said, with a touch of stiffness in his voice and manner; "and—forgive me, I thought you would understand, too, that I meant it in earnest."

Again her face flamed. She divined that he was insinuating that by allowing him to meet her as she had done, she had given him a certain amount of encouragement. She felt the sting of truth, though her pride took fire at his veiled reproach.

"Please forgive me," she said, "I have behaved foolishly. But I was always so sure that it was your cousin that you——"

"It was not. It was you, Miss Saltmarsh!"—wounded self-esteem forgotten again—"you must believe it!" with eager passion.

A feeling of indignant scorn for the man who had dangled about one girl so long, leading her and every one else to think that he meant to marry her, and who now asked another woman to be his wife, was lost suddenly in a feeling of touched wonder that he could ask her, with that stigma on her name, to be his wife.

"And yet you heard what Mrs. Dacre said the other night!" she exclaimed. "Do you know what it might cost you socially to have a wife who had a past to be explained?"

It swept over him suddenly, with a rush of chill conviction, what it would mean, and it sobered him into counting the cost of the sacrifice he was making

of his much-honoured name and esteemed person.

"Of course you could explain it," he said, doggedly.

But she read the doubt in his face.

"You are very kind," she said.

He flushed. He was keenly alive to the veiled satire in her voice and eyes.

"I don't know what you mean," he said, hotly. "I suppose a man can't do more than ask a woman to be his wife to show what he thinks of her. I asked you before I asked you anything about that wretched story. I was sure it could be explained, or else I shouldn't have come to find you to-day. I don't know why you should scorn me like this. For your own sake you might listen to me. As my wife, those miserable chatterboxes would not dare to rake up the past. They would know it was all right, and if you would only tell me and give me the right of defending you, I would marry you to-morrow, if you would have me."

He spoke out in his aggrieved wonder and wrath, the strong doubt raised by her question of the wisdom of his conduct driving him into putting his request into words, from which his more passionate eagerness of a few moments before would have saved him.

A queer little smile played round her mouth.

"You are very kind," she said, in the same tone as before. "I feel the honour you are paying me; but—even with that story, as you know it, behind me, I would be taken on sufferance by no man into his life."

He crimsoned.

"I——" Then anger and wounded self-esteem conquered again the momentary shame. "You are rough on a fellow," he said, sulkily, "whose only fault towards you is one of—confidence." He was forgetting courtesy.

Her eyes flashed; but her voice was quiet.

"No," she said, "I do not forget. I will say more; I—forgive me—scarcely

thought that you could have been equal to such generosity, though I had found your society very pleasant. I see I misjudged you." Then, with one of those swift, sudden changes which made her so bewilderingly fascinating, the mockery vanished, and a smile, very sweet but intensely sad, crossed her lips. "Ah, don't let us quarrel like this," she said. "There are too many tragedies in life for us to make them. You are as mistaken in yourself as much as you are in me. You don't really care for me. Do you know what would happen if I were mad enough—wicked enough—to take you at your word? At the end of a month you would regret your Quixotic conduct, for such it would seem to you after a little. At the end of two you would shrink from and fear the world's sneers and neglect. At the end of three you would hate me. Hush, Captain Dacre. Go away now, please, and—marry your cousin Cecilia."

The little fine mockery returned to the voice; but there was something softer for a moment in the brown eyes as they looked after the retreating figure of the indignant, sulky Captain.

It had been generous, after all—his proposal. His love had been sincere enough as far as it went.

"Ah, but how he would have hated his folly afterwards," she said to herself. "Even the truth, when he knew it, would not have prevented him regretting Cecilia Dacre and her life, whose story began and ended in him."

That evening after dinner, Captain Dacre proposed to his cousin in the conservatory. She looked at him a little strangely, and, after a moment's hesitation, said "Yes." But when he, forcing his thoughts with an effort from another woman, whose vision at that moment rose up between him and the girl by his side, roused himself to the fact that an engagement was usually sealed by a kiss, she drew herself back sharply from his outstretched arm, and before he could stop her, she fled, with a little, half hysterical laugh, from the conservatory.

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